

**Saint Paul Planning Commission  
City Hall Conference Center  
15 Kellogg Boulevard West**

**Minutes September 20, 2013**

A meeting of the Planning Commission of the City of Saint Paul was held Friday, September 20, 2013, at 8:30 a.m. in the Conference Center of City Hall.

**Commissioners Present:** Mmes. Merrigan, Perrus, Porter, Reveal, Shively, Thao, Wang, Wencl; and Messrs. Connolly, Edgerton, Lindeke, Makarios, Nelson, Ochs, Oliver, and Ward.

**Commissioners Absent:** Ms. \*Noecker, and Messrs. \*Gelgelu, \*Schertler, \*Spaulding, and \*Wickiser.

\*Excused

**Also Present:** Donna Drummond, Planning Director; Bill Dermody, Josh Williams, and Sonja Butler, Department of Planning and Economic Development staff.

**I. Approval of minutes September 6, 2013.**

**MOTION:** *Commissioner Reveal moved approval of the minutes of September 6, 2013. Commissioner Ward seconded the motion. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

**II. Chair's Announcements**

Chair Wencl announced that the commissioners received a survey in their packets and asked them to turn it in today so that the information can be tabulated.

**III. Planning Director's Announcements**

Donna Drummond announced that on September 18<sup>th</sup> the City Council approved a resolution requesting that the Planning Commission study zoning changes to the sign ordinance regarding murals, flexible dynamic display screens and outdoor business signs. One of the reasons cited was a decision to allow the Creative Kid Stuff store on Grand Avenue to have their big cat images not counted as a sign. The City Council made this decision on appeal of a BZA determination that they were a sign. The City Attorney's office said based on the Council's decision those types of signs in the future have to be considered public art. The Council is requesting further study to determine if there can be a more fine grained set of regulations developed for those situations.

The Met Council recently released its forecast for population, households and employment for all of the cities in the seven county metropolitan area. Every ten years the Met Council requires cities to update their comprehensive plans. Prior to that they go through a process to forecast growth for the region and develop regional policy plans for development of the region. The process this decade is being called Thrive MSP 2040. There will be further development of these

regional policies with input from the communities and then in 2015 they will tell all the cities to start working on their comprehensive plan updates. The Met Council is forecasting more of the growth in the region to be in the central cities. For Saint Paul the 2010 population census was 285,000 and they are forecasting to a population of 338,000 by 2040. This is a significant increase, given that the city has been fairly stable in population in the past 20-30 years.

#### IV. Zoning Committee

**SITE PLAN REVIEW** – List of current applications. *(Tom Beach, 651/266-9086)*

Two items came before the Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, September 17, 2013:

- Western U Plaza, multi-use development on former Old Home Dairy site at 376 University Avenue West (at Western).
- Regional Ballpark, grading and rerouting utilities to prepare site for construction of the ballpark (additional plans will be submitted at a future date for the ballpark) at 351 East 5<sup>th</sup> Street (at Broadway).

One item to come before the Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, September 24, 2013:

- Storage building for Light Rail Operations and Maintenance Facility, 23' x 56' storage building located to the east of the main building at 340 Broadway.

One item to come before the Site Plan Review Committee on Tuesday, October 1, 2013:

Loomis Armored Transport Facility, new building and parking lot at 1039 East 7<sup>th</sup> Street.

#### NEW BUSINESS

#13-226-244 Associated Bank (Snelling/Selby) – Rezone from B2 General Business, RM2 Multiple-Family Residential, VP Vehicular Parking, and I1 Light Industrial to T2 and T3 Traditional Neighborhood. 176 Snelling Avenue area bounded by Marshall, Snelling, Selby, and Saratoga. *(Josh Williams, 651/266-6659)*

**MOTION:** *Commissioner Nelson moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the rezoning. The motion carried 14 with 1 abstention (Edgerton) on a voice vote.*

#13-226-009 Associated Bank Drive-Through Sales – Conditional use permit for drive-through sales and services with modification of number of permitted lanes. 202 Snelling Avenue North, NE corner of Dayton Avenue. *(Josh Williams, 651/266-6659)*

Commissioner Ochs asked if there was a bypass lane, if they're going to add an additional drive-through lane.

Commissioner Nelson said there is not a separate bypass lane if there is stacking. This configuration is set up so that there is a parking aisle, which shares access to the drive-through lanes. There are about half a dozen spaces on the south side of the parking lot facing Dayton.

The two-way drive aisle for these spaces shares access to the stacking area for the four drive-through aisles.

Commissioner Ochs thinks that there is or was a requirement for a by-pass for fast food drive-through restaurants.

Commissioner Nelson said there was some discussion about the shared parking drive aisle access and the potential for stacked cars to use that drive aisle access. If for some reason more than 12 cars want to stack, that 13<sup>th</sup> car, if it pulled into a stacking lane, would block the drive aisle to the parking spaces.

Chair Wencl added that this was configured so that the head lights would not go into the residential area but go into the street area.

Commissioner Ochs said that it may be that when there are multiple drive-through lanes the bypass lane is not required, but if there is a single drive-through lane then a bypass lane may be required.

Josh Williams, PED staff said that there is nothing in the T2 standards that were used for the conditional use permit that required a bypass lane.

**MOTION:** *Commissioner Nelson moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the conditional use permit subject to additional conditions. The motion carried 14 with 1 abstention (Edgerton) on a voice vote.*

#13-225-722 Elizabeth Palaima and Andrew Satrijo – Establishment of nonconforming use permit for use as a duplex. 1598 East Shore Drive between Idaho and Brighten Place. (Bill Dermody, 651/266-6617)

Commissioner Oliver said that two people testified in opposition and asked what the opposition was.

Commissioner Nelson said that one person testified in opposition who has some rental properties and was concerned about who might be renting there, the future and the nonconforming use.

Commissioner Merrigan added that a second person testified in opposition who was concerned about how they would vet their renters. The neighbor was not necessarily speaking to this particular property, but the notion of allowing rental properties in their neighborhood. Commissioner Merrigan said one of the biggest concerns is that this is the second case that they have seen where a property was sold to new owners and the property was listed as single family, previous owners operated it as a mother-in law apartment (in this case) or a duplex, and the new owners buy the property thinking they can do the same thing.

Commissioner Nelson noted that part of the discussion involved the MLS listing, which actually listed this as a mother-in law apartment.

Commissioner Perrus said the MLS listing stated that this was a single family home, however in the notes it said there was a mother-in law suite. It didn't say you were allowed to rent it, just

that it was there. This could be confusing but it was very clearly stated that it was a single family home and zoning for single family.

Commissioner Edgerton said that Commissioner Wickiser was against this and he would like to know what his reasoning was.

Bill Dermody, PED staff said that Commissioner Wickiser did not state a reason; however he did have questions about the possibility of returning this to a single family home after this particular owner sold the home. So his opposition may be related to that.

Commissioner Reveal added that the other issue he had was whether or not it would conform as a duplex to fire safety and separation issues, because there were building code questions about whether or not it would meet those requirements.

**MOTION:** *Commissioner Nelson moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the establishment of legal nonconforming use subject to an additional condition. The motion carried 14-1 (Ochs) on a voice vote.*

#13-225-917 Ace Auto Parts – Conditional use permit for outside auto sales with modification of 15,000 sq. ft. lot area requirement. 780 Rice Street, SE corner at Sycamore. (Jake Reilly, 651-266-6618).

**MOTION:** *Commissioner Nelson moved the Zoning Committee's recommendation to approve the conditional use permit subject to an additional condition. The motion carried unanimously on a voice vote.*

Commissioner Nelson announced the items on the agenda for the next Zoning Committee meeting on Thursday, September 26, 2013.

V. **Plans for Snelling and W. 7<sup>th</sup> Arterial Bus Rapid Transit** – Informational presentation by Charles Carlson and Katie Roth, Metro Transit.

Katie Roth is a planner with Metro Transit's BRT project office and Program Manager for the Arterial Bus Rapid Transit Program. She presented an update on the development of the Arterial Bus Rapid Transit and the Snelling Avenue/Ford Parkway Corridor. Metro Transit completed the Arterial Transitways Corridor Study in April 2012, looking at twelve of the highest ridership bus corridors, and looking at ways to improve speed and passenger experience. They developed this arterial bus transit concept and out of this came the Snelling Corridor and the West 7<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor proposals. What the study identified was slow transit speeds and that only 3% of the delay on these corridors is spent stopped in traffic, which helps inform the Arterial BRT concept in that they are not looking at a dedicated lane for transit in these corridors, they're running in mixed traffic and using spot improvements at signals with station spacing. For the Snelling Avenue line, which will be known as the A line (this series of Arterial BRT will have letters) there will be 20 stations that serve about 75% of the current riders. About 20% are within one stop of these proposed stations, so only 5% of the current riders will walk more than a block to get to these stations. The service plan calls for 10 minute BRT service so every 10 minutes there will be a BRT bus. An analysis of the travel time difference by making improvements along the line shows a 27% faster trip in the peak period than the bus service today. As a result of making these speed and facility improvements they believe that they can increase ridership. The BRT

would become the primary service in the corridor but the local service would remain to serve the local trips and for people who didn't want to or weren't able to walk to a station.

Commissioner Thao said on the corners where both local bus service and BRT is located could there be potential for both sides of the street to lose their parking because they become bus stops?

Ms. Roth said they are primarily looking to consolidate the local service and the BRT service at one station. There might be a couple of cases where there are so many local buses that use it that it wouldn't be a good idea to have them stopping like the BRT would. But in most cases it would be a shared station.

Regarding funding and project cost, the total cost of building the A line including stations, technology, vehicles, the transit signal priorities and all of the design and engineering is about \$25 million. Today they have \$15 million in funding secured, leaving a \$10 million funding gap. So they are looking at a lot of different avenues to fill this gap and continue to move forward with design and getting ready to build and get the funding in place. In terms of project schedule they have been doing a lot of planning, predesign and community engagement work in early 2013. Moving to the later part of 2013 they are initiating concept design, and by the end of 2014 they can break ground on some of the stations, constructing through 2014 and opening the line by the end of 2015. In terms of the overall schedule for arterial BRT, Snelling Avenue will be the first and West 7<sup>th</sup> Street will be the second line.

Chair Wencl asked about the \$7 million cost for buses. Is that for new buses and how are they different from the current buses?

Ms. Roth said that they will run a different type of bus, which will only be used on the BRT service. There will be a different paint scheme and they would not be putting a lot of advertisement on these buses. In terms of how it would be different from the standard bus the ones on Snelling will be a 40 foot bus, which is the standard size, with a different configuration inside of seats to floor ratio, wider doors making it easier to for passengers to move around and for fare enforcement to happen aboard a bus. In the future they see a mix of the 40 foot buses and the 60 foot articulated accordion buses being used on BRT lines, but for now it will be the 40 foot buses on Snelling.

Commissioner Edgerton said on Snelling Avenue there is a considerable wait at the lights when trying to cross Snelling, and it would be very irritating if waiting in a long line and approaching the green light it then switches because a bus is coming. Are we going to run into a lot of that happening?

Ms. Roth said one of the key metrics that they are looking at in order to help define how they'll use this transit signal priority is what's going to be the total person delay at an intersection given signal priority or not. Example: if there are 40 people on a bus coming through and there are four cars waiting at the intersecting cross street that is a different condition then it would be if there were 40 people on bus and 80 cars waiting at the cross street. The cross streets further north on the corridor that serve as relievers for Hwy 36 are not good candidates for transit signal priority, because of the issues mentioned.

Commissioner Connolly asked if they really care if it takes 36-48 minutes to get from Roseville to Hiawatha or is the real measure Snelling to Hiawatha or are there any other more finely grained measures?

Ms. Roth said they know people are not using this line to make trips from end to end but it's a good way to communicate that, as they think about building something that is a 10 mile corridor. The important part is that even shorter trips are going to be a few minutes faster and also a lot more reliable.

Commissioner Lindeke asked about bikes on the buses. Are they going to be like the current racks on the outside of the bus or on the inside like the light rail? How is that going to be handled?

Ms. Roth said that is something they are looking at, along with their partners in Dakota County at NBTA as they roll out the Red line on Cedar Avenue. They have a 40 foot bus with an onboard bike rack and they are learning as that goes out how that's working. They've gotten some feedback positive and negative and they're taking that back and trying to get the right answer. They don't know what they will end up with but the things that they are taking into account is how many people are going to be on that bus, how easy is it to get around on the bus with a bike, what's the delay of someone bringing a bike on the bus versus putting it outside on the front of the bus, so those are things that they will continue to work on.

Charles Carlson, Senior Manager of the BRT Project Office said that the next arterial BRT line will be on West 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Route 54, beginning at the Mall of America, continuing to the airport then to the heart of the service area which is 7<sup>th</sup> Street between Maynard and the Union Depot. They are also looking at potentially extending it in a first build out to the east side via East 7<sup>th</sup>, Arcade and Maryland Avenue. About two-thirds of the ridership on Route 54 is within the Saint Paul area. It's the greatest use within the community as well as offering connections to the airport and Bloomington. That is also what makes it so appealing to think about extending it to the east side. On this project they do not have much funding identified yet. The project costs more because they would use the larger articulated buses. They have \$5 million of MnDOT Bonds and a grant from the federal government, and they are looking to fill this out because the timing is critical. They are starting to initiate some of the advance planning on this corridor, beginning outreach so that next year they can conceptionally design what this would be, how far up the east side to go, where stations would be and how they might be configured. As they get into 2014 they can get into heavy design of this corridor and obtain environmental clearance to begin. And then they would initiate construction in 2015 and open this new service in the fall of 2016, roughly a year after the A line on Snelling Avenue would have opened.

As they continue with this planning they are aware that these lines match some of the lines of the Saint Paul Streetcar long range vision. They are working in close coordination both at the project manager level as well as the agency level. However, as they move ahead they are working with the bus improvements mindful of future streetcar improvements but not designing a streetcar station where a bus stops at. They are also attuned to the broader corridor studies so that they are working in harmony and coordination while they roll out these nearer term bus improvements waiting longer term for the streetcar, light rail or dedicated bus way type of improvements that might be envisioned by those projects.

Commissioner Reveal asked about fare policy. Will there be premium fares or some fare variation based on demand?

Mr. Carlson said the fare will be the standard local bus fare, same as LRT.

Commissioner Ward said the Snelling Avenue Corridor has a \$10 million gap and the West 7<sup>th</sup> Street Corridor has a \$21 million gap. What is the anticipated payback with this new type of service? Is there a threshold at some point in which it's not working and the plug is pulled?

Mr. Carlson replied these are structured as permanent transit way investments that Metro Transit will pursue. There's a strong commitment to an increased level of service including nights and weekends. Where they have had trouble is that transit funding, especially transit operations funding has faced a lot of challenges in recent years. An exception would be this past legislative session, there was a significant restoration of funding that came out of that year, and as a result they have been able to reinstate the service that they had previously cut over the last couple of years. With these BRT investments they would be seeking to make that investment permanent, and these are seen as policy investments as well as physical investments.

Commissioner Edgerton said regarding land use planning he's assuming this has all been coordinated in terms of the location of the stops. On West 7<sup>th</sup> there's the idea of nodes, commercial nodes at different intersections, and he wants to make sure that as we review this or as we're putting together planning efforts for these areas we factor in where these buses are going to be stopping because that will have a big impact on what can happen at different intersections.

Mr. Carlson said that the advanced planning of where these stops go changes based on the condition at the time when they put them in. A good example is the Snelling and Selby redevelopment. They had a general idea of a stop somewhere serving the Selby area in the earlier plans, but now that's evolving into a really specific opportunity to put a station in and it should go right here. In the case of the B Line they went out last February 2012 with some study results. They had a public meeting at the Mississippi Market on West 7<sup>th</sup> and the manager of the store said, I know you show it up there but we'd really like it if the stop was down here. Look at the things that have changed in this neighborhood. We have this housing development across the street and there's a park in the works down the block. We see why you have it there at that big cross street but the center of this area is shifting. Those are the kind of discussions that we can get into as we begin more detailed planning and then tailor the specific siting of the station to match what would be best in the community.

Commissioner Nelson said with the BRT deadlines approaching and in terms of priorities and funding and how projects often chase the dollars that are available based upon when grants are being made, how do you reconcile doing a really good job of deciding what takes precedence or how that should interface with the streetcar?

Mr. Carlson said they are really seeking to define the function of both these types of service and BRT invariably is a longer service that's more akin to replacing existing longer local bus routes. Streetcars are a much shorter service. They don't replace any bus service and are more of a pedestrian accelerator and shorter trip transit service. The challenge is communicating the need for both of those kinds of improvements in the context of extremely limited transit funding.

Commissioner Makarios asked about the potential extension to the east side of BRT and how that overlaps with the planning for Gateway Corridor.

Mr. Carlson replied the Gateway Corridor primarily focuses on I-94 east and exploring options on East 7<sup>th</sup> Street and other streets. It's another piece to coordinate with as well as the Rush Line. Gateway seems to more focused on a freeway alignment but it is something they need to stay attuned to both in the official process as well as coordinating with staff.

Donna Drummond, Planning Director, said one of the benefits of LRT is the level boarding for wheelchairs and people with strollers etc. With this type of bus is there level boarding? It didn't look like it so how will handicapped accessibility be handled?

Mr. Carlson said the intent on these lines is to provide a higher curb where it's feasible to do so. Typically a regular curb is about 6 inches tall they're seeking a 9 or 10 inch curb instead of the 14 inch curb required for full level boarding. The reason is that bus heights are different from each other and it's not advantageous to design a system around a given floor height. Also there's a lot of engineering that needs to go into designing a level boarding platform and given the urban context and some of its constrained right of way along these lines raising a sidewalk a couple of inches is manageable but raising it 8 inches is a big challenge. Where possible they do want to do an increase because it significantly reduces the work it takes to get onto the bus but between a kneeling bus and that raised platform they think it will be a significant improvement.

Ms. Drummond said so a kneeling bus would try to split the difference in a way?

Mr. Carlson said they'd be pretty close and with the low floor buses and the ramp that deploys out to serve wheelchair customers they're much faster than the older lifts were. The whole story of this project is making transit more visible and easier to use and faster but also fitting into the neighborhood and the surrounding context that they're already operating in.

Commissioner Ward said with all this investment in transit is there any for thought about outreach related to job equity for members that live along these corridors as well as seeking out contractors and employees of color?

Mr. Carlson said on that front they currently have an active RFP for design services that have established a disadvantage business enterprise goal for participation. It's not location specific, it's not specific to the Snelling Corridor but within the context of that program it is an established goal. Moving forward it's too early to say what might be possible but it's definitely an interest that they have heard and are working with the constraints of some of the funding approaches and the laws that accompany them as well as any opportunities they have along these routes.

Chair Wencl noted that in the early 90's she was on the small area plan committee in the Phalen area and they had envisioned a transit hub. So this has been a long time coming but she is encouraged to see that they are actually talking about doing an extension to the East 7<sup>th</sup> Street Arcade area because that is an area that has long been under served.

Mr. Carlson said that they are excited to improve service in one of their most important markets in Saint Paul.

**VI. Comprehensive Planning Committee**

Commissioner Merrigan said that they met last Tuesday and they continued to review the West Midway Industrial Strategy. They are looking at more specific recommendations and they will continue looking at them over the next 2-3 meetings with a goal of bringing back a recommendation to the full commission of the parts that will be adopted as an amendment to the Comprehensive Plan. Their next meeting is Tuesday, October 1, 2013.

**VII. Neighborhood Planning Committee**

Commissioner Oliver had no report, but announced that their next meeting on Wednesday, September 25, 2013 has been cancelled.

**VIII. Transportation Committee**

Commissioner Ochs reported that the committee met last week and talked about the West Midway Industrial Strategy transportation elements and they discussed the East Side Transit Conversation update. The next meeting is on Monday, September 23, 2013. On the agenda is the Red Rock Corridor update and the Gateway Corridor update.

**IX. Communications Committee**

Commissioner Thao had no report.

**X. Task Force/Liaison Reports**

Commissioner Reveal announced that the West Side Flats Community Task Force will be meeting on Monday, September 23, 2013 at the Neighborhood Development Alliance (NeDA) Office to continue discussing the draft Development Guidelines and proposed zoning. The meeting starts at 6:00 p.m.

**XI. Old Business**

None.

**XII. New Business**

None.

**XII. Adjournment**

Meeting adjourned at 9:58 a.m.

Recorded and prepared by  
Sonja Butler, Planning Commission Secretary  
Planning and Economic Development Department,  
City of Saint Paul

Respectfully submitted,



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Donna Drummond  
Planning Director

Approved October 4, 2013

(Date)



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Daniel Ward II  
Secretary of the Planning Commission

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